A Distinguished Churchman Writes of

The Centenary of the Dioc

THE DIOCESE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA is now celebrating its 100th birthday, having been created by the issue of Royal Letters Patent by Queen Victoria on January 12, 1859, nominating the Rev. George Hills, Vicar of Great Yarmouth, as the first Bishop.

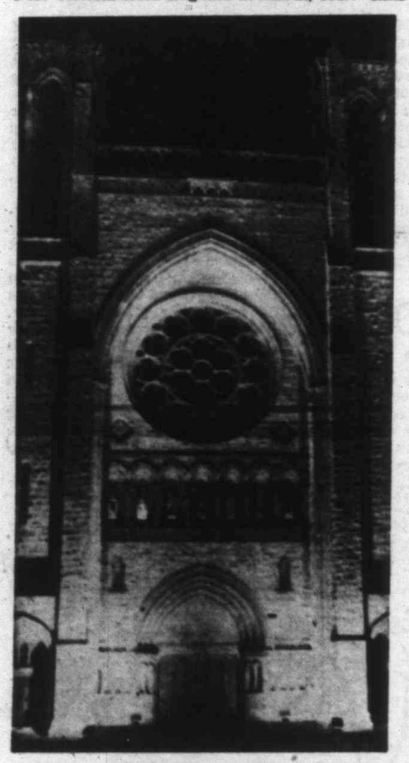
The consecration of Dr. Hills at the hands of the Archbishop of Canterbury took place in Westminster Abbey on St. Matthias' Day, February 24, 1859.

The well-known benefactress, Miss Burdett-Coutts (afterwards Baroness), generously endowed the Bishopric, as she had previously done in Adelaide and Capetown. Behind these events, however, there lies some interesting history.

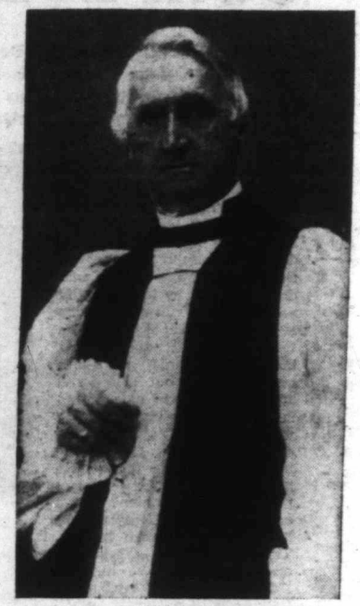
The Church of England first came to the Pacific Northwest in the person of the Rev. Herbert Beaver, who arrived at Fort Vancouver (now in the State of Washington) on September 6, 1836, to become the chaplain to the Hudson's Bay Company, which had been established on the north bank of the Columbia River in 1825. It seems that Mr. Beaver and his wife were rather unhappy in this post, being obviously unprepared for the sort of conditions existing there. Apparently they were not accorded the position of privileges to which they felt entitled as representatives of the Established Church of England on the far West Coast of North America.

However, Mr. Beaver remained at Fort Vancouver until November, 1838, when he returned to England. No successor to him was appointed at Fort Vancouver, and it was not until after the signing of the Oregon Treaty that any attempt was made to find a new chaplain and schoolmaster.

By that time Fort Victoria had replaced Fort Vancouver as the centre of the company's activities, Fort Vancouver now being in American territory. In due course, however, the Rev. R. J. Staines was appointed as chaplain, arriving in Fort Victoria from England in March, 1849. Like



A view of Christ Church Cathedral, where distinguished churchmen will preach during the centenary services.



THE RT. REV. GEORGE HILLS . . . first Bishop.

his predecessor, Beaver, neither he nor his wife successfully adapted themselves to their new environment, although they made a distinct contribution to the welfare of the community.

Staines was more successful as a schoolmaster than a cleric, although his strict discipline seems to have been widely resented. He had no previous experience as a clergyman, having been specially ordained for the chaplaincy at Fort Victoria in August, 1848. Somewhat irregularly, he was ordained deacon and priest on the same day by the Bishop of Norwich, on letters dimissory from the Bishop of London. It was not long before he became a thorn in the flesh of the Hudson's Bay Company officials, openly supporting, and becoming the leader of a group of discontented colonists, on whose behalf he set out for England in February, 1854, to make representations to the home government, but he and his fellow passengers perished at sea, within a few days of their departure.

THE FIRST CATHEDRAL

The following year saw the appointment of the Rev. Edward Cridge, incumbent of Christ Church, West Ham, London, and previously second master of the North Waltham Grammar School. At this time the question of an Established Church on Vancouver Island was seriously considered, but was wisely dropped, as has been the case elsewhere. It is interesting to note, however, there still remains an Overseas Established Church in Barbados, where, unlike England, the stipends of the bishop and clergy are paid by the state.

Mr. Cridge completed the construction of Victoria District Church (afterwards the first Cathedral) in 1856. He was a staunch Evengelical, of whom the bishop wrote on his arrival, "Mr. Cridge is a truly good man, a sincere and devout Christian. He enters into all my plans, and is a great support to me." In his description of Christ Church, the Bishop said it "stands nobly on a site which may one day be occupied by a cathedral. It is of wood, and accommodates about 400 people."

IMMEDIATELY AFTER his consecration, Bishop Hills engaged in continuous travelling and speaking on behalf of "the Columbia Mission." He gained the support of a large number of people, and secured help from the Church Missionary Society, and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. At length, on January 6, 1860, he arrived in his diocese, having been likened by Bishop Wilberforce to St. Boniface, "England's Apostle to distant Columbia." The diocese embraced the whole territory of British Columbia, and he is still remembered in many parts of the province as the devoted pioneer bishop, who threw himself into his work with a sort of apostolic zeal. He was, like many of the pioneers, a man of vigor, courage, self-reliance, endurance and perserverance. During an episcopate of 33 years, this great pioneering bishop laid deep and abiding foundations. After his death, one of his former clergy wrote of him: "Bishop Hills was noted neither as a speaker, a preacher, nor a scholar, and yet he was a great influence. This was partly due to his fine presence, his magnificent voice, his rare power of conversation, his unwavering faith, and if a work was God's He would make it grown in His own time. He could create enthusiasm in his workers, and draw out their strong affection. He we a true Anglican churchman. There was little room for ritual in pioneer missionary work amongst rough gold miners who had forgotten how to pray, if ever they had learned, and Bishop Hills' counsel to his itinerant workers was 'Give them plenty of preaching and plenty of singing'—rightly gauged the receptiveness of congregations gathered frequently outside gambling hells and in drinking saloons."

THE EARLY HISTORY of the diocese supplies abundant evidence as to the existence of strong opinions and deeply-rooted prejudices, which caused the good bishop much pain and disappointment. A bishop's life is not exactly a bed of roses, and it seems the thorns greatly exceeded the roses for the first occupant of the See. He was a Tractarian who early in his ministerial life worked at Leeds under the celebrated Dr. Hook, who was regarded as "the foremost parish priest of his day." He apparently learnt much from Hook, particularly the importance of correct ecclesiastical procedure and discipline. His ministry at St. Mary's, Leeds, and at Great Yarmouth, as well as the early days of his episcopate, bore the impress of Dr. Hook's influence.

DIFFERENCES DEVELOP

In December, 1865, the bishop appointed the Rev. Edward Cridge as dean, which was a mark of confidence in a man totally unlike him in his views and training. Perhaps the bishop cherished the hope that one might be the complement of the other. If so, he was disappointed. It is widely held that the differences which developed between the bishop and Mr. Cridge were entirely due to the bishop's desire to introduce ritualistic practices in the cathedral services. However the bishop was not a ritualist, and such an assertion is untrue. Dean Cridge had invited the Archdeacon of Vancouver (Reece) to preach at Evensong on the day when the new cathedral was consecrated December 5, 1872. The preacher delivered an able sermon on the subject of worship, and suggested encouragement of a moderate ritual, maintaining that it springs from a revived religious life. At the close of the sermon, Dean Cridge protested against the teaching of the preacher in an impassioned manner, and this led to a stamping of feet and clapping of hands. The bishop subsequently rebuked him for his unseemly action, and it appears that the episcopal censure was so resented by Cridge that he forthwith publicly opposed the bishop's views, attacked episcopacy, and denied the bishop's authority as well as his right and discretion as to preaching in the cathedral.

On January 9, 1874, Cridge denounced the idea of a diocesan synod in the local press, maintaining that as the bishop had promoted the synod, he had seceded from the Church of England, and was not therefore a bishop to whom canonical obedience was due. There were many other aspects of this unhappy controversy, which eventually led to Mr. Cridge's trial before an Ecclesiastical Court. However he refused to acknowledge the jurisdiction of this court and its judgment, and so Dr. Hills had to appeal to the Supreme Court of the Province. The Chief Justice, Sir Matthew Begbie, delivered judgment in favor of the bishop on October 24, 1874, and forthwith Mr. Cridge and his supporters abandoned the Church of England. The resulting schism, like the unfortunate controversy, was a blow to the church, and it saddened the rest of the bishop's life. Meanwhile, however, some good came out of the evil: discipline was